

NEWS RELEASE



Waterloo Region
Suicide Prevention Council
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Renison University College leads the way in training BSW students in suicide intervention and prevention

WATERLOO – Suicide intervention training is now mandatory for full-time Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) students at Renison University College.

Renison, affiliated with the University of Waterloo, is partnering with the Waterloo Region Suicide Prevention Council to provide Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) for all 60 students enrolled full-time in the BSW program. ASIST is an internationally recognized, accredited two-day suicide skills training workshop. While a handful of institutions offer this training to their BSW students, it's not usually a mandatory element of earning a BSW degree.

Suicide prevention training for social workers is not currently mandated in Canada, despite the increasing numbers of suicidal ideation, attempts, and completed suicides within the province. Training and education for people who come in contact with high-risk individuals has been shown to be an effective suicide prevention intervention.

"Social workers often find themselves in positions where they are working with individuals who are struggling with thoughts of suicide but in the social work profession," says Professor Susan Cadell, director of Renison's School of Social Work. "We currently do not get enough training in suicide prevention. Being prepared with awareness, knowledge, and suicide intervention skills is a critical step in equipping our future social workers with suicide prevention and post-vention skill competencies."

Tana Nash, executive director of the Waterloo Region Suicide Prevention Council, says that Renison is leading by example. "It is our hope that other institutions training our future social workers will take notice and follow suit – that this training can be built into the curriculum of other social work programs in the future to ensure sustainability and reduce our reliance on local fundraising efforts," says Nash.

On January 6 and 7, 2015, two ASIST workshops of 30 students each will be facilitated by members of the Suicide Intervention Community Training Team who are comprised of a variety of local organizations and led by the Canadian Mental Health Association, Waterloo Wellington Dufferin Branch. Renison's prospective social work graduates will learn how to identify people with thoughts of suicide and be given opportunity to learn and practice skills to equip them in delivering competent suicide interventions.

Several suicide prevention and awareness trainings are available for workplaces, community groups, or can be taken as an individual. For more information, contact workshops@cmhawwd.ca or visit <http://wwd.cmha.ca>

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